

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER VISITS BASQUE PROVINCES

REF: MADRID 6919, 6977

1. INTERIOR MINISTER MARTIN VILLA COMPLETES HIS VISIT TO
THREE OF SPAIN'S FOUR BASQUE PROVINCES TODAY IN ALAVA, DUR-
ING STOPS IN GUIPUZCOA(SEPT 17) AND VIZCAYA (SEPT 18-19).

MARTIN VILLA, WHO MADE IT CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET THAT THE
PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP WAS TO GAIN FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE OF BASQUE
PROBLEMS, DID A GREAT DEAL OF LISTENING BUT APPARENTLY PRO-
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MISSED NOTHING.TODAY'S PRESS REMORED THAT HE DISCUSSED WITH

PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS A POSSIBLE VISIT BY THE KING TO THE
BASQUE COUNTRY.

2. DURING HIS ONE DAY STAY IN THE GUIPUZCOAN CAPITAL OF SAN SEBASTIAN, MARTIN VILLA MET, AMONG OTHERS, WITH THE CIVIL AND MILITARY GOVERNORS, THE PROVINCES MAYOR GUIPUZCAO'S "CORTES" MEMBERS, PRIVATE SECTORS REPRESENTED IVES AND LABOR LEADERS, THE PROVINCES LEADING CHURCH MAN, AND MEMBERS OF THE CIVIL GUARD AND ARMED POLICE. THIS PATTERN WAS LATER IN VIZCAYA, AND ALAVA.)

3. IN ADDITION TO THE SHOOTING OF A BASQUE YOUTH IN FUENTERABIA (REFTELS. WHICH PRECIPITATED MARTIN VILLA'S VISIT), THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS DISCUSSED BY THE INTERIOR MINISTER, HIS PARTY AND THEIR INTERLOCUTORS REPORTEDLY INCLUDED: THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC ORDER FORCES AND THE STRENGTHENING OF THE AUTHORITY OF LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS OVER THE POLICE AND CIVIL GUARD; AUTHORIZATION TO FLY THE BASQUE FLAG, REINSTITUTION OF SPECIAL BASQUE ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PRIVILEGES (FUEROS) "OFFICIAL" STATUS FOR THE BASQUE LANGUAGE. AND STATE SUPPORT FOR BASQUE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS.

4. THROUGHOUT THE TRIP THUS FAR, MARTIN VILLAS HAS EMPHASIZED THE GOVT'S COMMITMENT TO GUARANTEEING DEMOCRATIC RIGHT AND FREEDOMS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME INSURING THAT THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE WILL NOT BE UNDERMINED. THROUGH MEETINGS WITH A RELATIVELY BROAD SPECTRUM OF PROVINCIAL FIGURES, SYMBOLIC GESTURES, SUCH AS A TRIP TO GUERNICA, THE THRINE OF BASQUE NATIONALISM AND VISIT TO CIVIL GUARD AND ARMED POLICE UNITS. THE INTERIOR MINISTER CLEARLY IS ATTEMPTING TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE THAT THE GOVT WILL LISTEN TO AND ATTEMPT TO RESPOND TO WHAT IT CONSIDERS TO BE LEGITIMATE BASQUE GRIVANCES, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME GUARANTEEING THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER. AS MARTIN VILLA TOLD ASSEMBLED CITY OFFICIALS IN BILBOA, "AT A TIME WHEN POLITICAL RIGHTS ARE BEING EXPANDED, IT IS MORE NECESSARY THAN EVER THAT AUTHORITY BE EXERCISED IN ORDER THAT THE TRANSITION TOWARD DEMOCRATIC GOALS CAN BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CARRIED OUT PEACEFULLY AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW".

5. IN THE SAME ADDRESS, MARTIN VILLA REAFFIRMED THE CONSTITUENT NATURE OF THE PARLIAMENT TO BE ELECTED NEXT YEAR AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP OF THE BASQUE PROVINCES AND OTHER REGIONS TO THE CENTRAL GOVT WOULD BE LEFT TO THAT AND SUBSEQUENT PARLIAMENTS TO DECIDE. ACCORDING TO THE INTERIOR MINISTER, "THE

DEFINITIVE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE REGIONS IS A
CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION, AND IT IS LOGICAL THAT IT BE
REPRESENTATIVES ELECTED FREELY BY THE PEOPLE WHO DETERMINE
THE JURIDICT POLITICAL NATURE OF THE VARIOUS REGIONS
WHICH MAKE UP THE PERMANENT SPANISH STATE."

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